

Bagram News Express



Start Right, Finish Strong | Vol. 3 Issue 17, November 1, 2009



Major breaks 1,000 combat hours milestone



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Major Sam Tucker (left), a Weapon Systems Officer assigned to the 335th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron here, breaks the 1,000 combat hour milestone as his F-15E Strike Eagle, tail number 484, taxis to its assigned spot. Surpassing more than 1,000 combat hours is a rare record in the F-15E community. Major Tucker is deployed from the 334th Fighter Squadron, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. John Jung)

**By Tech. Sgt. John Jung,
455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs**

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Growing up in Caldwell, Idaho, Sam Tucker listened to the stories of his grandfather, Lt. Col. (ret) Carroll Tucker, and his exploits as a B-17 Flying Fortress navigator in WWII; young Sam Tucker knew exactly what he wanted to do when he grew up.

Major Sam Tucker is still living out his dream as a flyer in the backseat of an F-15E Strike Eagle here in Afghanistan with the 335th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron. Recently, the Instructor Weapon Systems Officer, deployed from the 334th

Fighter Squadron, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., broke a milestone that few in his chosen career have reached - he surpassed 1,000 combat hours.

Breaking 1,000 combat hours is a huge feat according to Lt. Col. Eric Trychon, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group deputy commander. "It's a major career milestone and even a rarer milestone for those in the F-15E community," said the Worcester, Mass., native, who is deployed from Nellis AFB, Nev.

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COMBAT

"Most guys are just hoping to get to fly 1,000 hours in the jet, let alone 1,000 hours in combat," said Lt. Col. Christopher Anthony, 335th EFS squadron commander, deployed from Seymour Johnson AFB.

"It's all about longevity in flying," said Capt. Taylor Francis, a 4-year Air Force veteran Weapon Systems Officer. "Comparatively speaking, it's like playing football as long as Brett Favre or playing baseball as long as Cal Ripkin Jr.," continued the Dare County, N. C. native, also deployed from Seymour Johnson AFB. "It's day-in and day-out getting the job done and done well."

And getting the job done is what Major Tucker has prided himself in doing. He not only has 1,000 hours in combat, but more 2,300 hours in the Strike Eagle. Never one to shy away from his job or duty, he has deployed five times.

His first deployment was to the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing, Southwest Asia, then twice to the 379th AEW, Southwest Asia and twice more to Bagram, Afghanistan, where he is currently serving out an extended deployment. Major Tucker has flown in support of Operations Southern Watch, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

Deploying so often has been made a bit easier for the major due to the phenomenal support of his wife and children.

"I'm six for thirteen on anniversaries and have more pictures of my children's birthday parties than I've actually been to," said Major Tucker. "Luckily my family understands the mission and what it takes to get it done. My wife is a one-of-a-kind woman, they just don't make them like her anymore. I love her and my children dearly."

The love of his family and the flying is what keeps Major Tucker going as he strives for still further milestones.

A little to the left, please



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Staff Sgt. Terry Ellison (right), a loadmaster from the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, gives directions to Tech. Sgt. Mark Foreman (driver), Oct. 23, 2009. Sergeant Ellison is deployed from the Texas Air National Guard's 136th Airlift Wing and hails from Fort Worth, Texas. Sergeant Foreman, an air transportation specialist from the 455th Expeditionary Aerial Port Squadron, is deployed from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas and hails from San Antonio. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

The weapons of war adapt with the age of Airmen

By Capt. David Faggard
455th Air Expeditionary Wing
Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Airmen are using off-the-shelf commercial gaming equipment on the battlefield, and according to one Airman operating at a base still littered with Soviet-era landmines, they're a great fit.

When Senior Airman James Dobrynski, a St. Louis native, straps on his individual body armor, fire-resistant uniform and nine-millimeter handgun, he also grabs the half-inch camera-monitor fixed to his Oakley shades which are wired to a small backpack. Connected to that backpack is his Microsoft Xbox 360 game controller.

Operating remotely from the end of that controller isn't a game though, it's a \$200,000 robot designed to diffuse the deadliest of Improvised Explosive Devices the enemy can throw at Coalition forces in Afghanistan - and he's using these tools to save lives.

"I'm absolutely used to this controller," Airman Dobrynski said joking that he's always been an Xbox player and the transition from gaming to work was easy. "It's easy to go from a game you play off duty, to work and use the same exact controller," just for a much more serious situation he said.

Deployed to an explosive ordnance disposal flight here, from Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., Airman Dobrynski said using the game-controller is easy for younger Airmen.

"This is new technology," said the 25-year-old Airman as he looked through the multi-color display of the eyepiece. "The process is adaptive; if there's something you need be-



BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Senior Airman James Dobrynski, an explosives ordnance disposal technician, uses an Xbox controller to maneuver a robot during training recently. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Felicia Juenke)

cause a current tool or process doesn't work, you fix it and use it," said the Airman relating that their job is evolutionary and that having the right tool is critical to their mission success.

Older robot systems were double the weight; now even the batteries are 75 percent smaller, which are invaluable now that Airman Dobrynski carries them in his rucksack - a must he says while on dismounted patrol. The robot being used is the fourth generation for Airman Dobrynski; his previous model was controlled with a Playstation II controller.

His supervisor, Staff Sgt. Elizabeth Spradley, an EOD team chief deployed from

Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, said it's smart for the government and private companies to develop tools that younger Airmen can relate with.

The development of the equipment has changed from being a "huge, clunky switchboard to an adaptable controller younger Airmen can relate to," said Sergeant Spradley, a native of Albuquerque, N.M. "Most of the Airmen operating these systems are younger so this makes sense. The development of these tools are a direct result from more Airmen being on foot patrols outside the wire when space and weight are a premium."

455th AEW HISTORIAN PAGE

By Doug Beckstead
455th Air Expeditionary Wing
Historian

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- Sometimes really exciting things just seem to fall into your lap. Even in Afghanistan.

A week ago a retired master sergeant dropped into the History Office looking for something. He mentioned that last year he dropped a CD off to my predecessors with photos that he took while at Bagram in March-April 2002. That piqued my interest real fast.

After a quick look through our network drive I managed to find them. I asked if he could possibly spend an hour of his time going through them and explaining them to me.

He looked at his watch, commented that it was 1600 then and said, "I'm hoping to catch a flight at 2330. You've got me until then."

I had no idea what I was in for.

Over the next seven hours we went through almost 700 photographs filling in the pieces of who was in them, what they showed, and what was happening on Bagram at the time.

Now, if you think life sucks here now, imagine this: You arrive at zero-dark 30. You have no quarters to check into. They're still in the plane that brought you. All you see is blank ground with a few piles of plywood and lumber scattered about. Over to the right is an old yellow building with the windows blown out. It looks like some sort of control tower for the airport. In the middle of what is going to be your camp there stands the remains of an



Laying the foundation of Bagram Airfield



The sinks and showers

old building made out of mud bricks that are crumbling even as you step off the plane.

Welcome to your home away from home!

**See HISTORIAN
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HISTORIAN

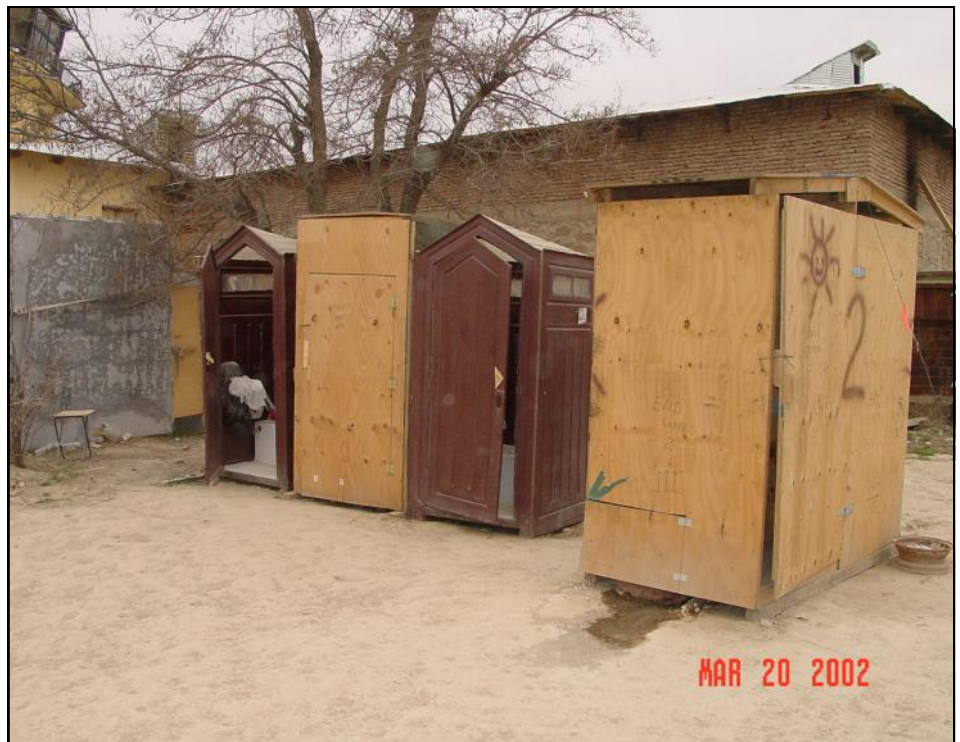
That was what greeted the detachment of Air Force personnel who arrived at Bagram Airfield on 20 March 2002. They were one of the few Air Force detachments to forward deploy into a war zone since the Vietnam War. That was another deployment Airmen were involved in over in Southeast Asia before most people here on Bagram were born.

And remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda were still active in the surrounding area, just waiting for a shot at the newly arrived Airmen.

So, they used bulldozers to push up a berm around the area where the RLBs in Camp Cunningham now stand. These provided some protection.

They went to work building wooden floors and erecting tents to give them some place to sleep and get out of any inclement weather.

Cadillacs? There were none of them either. What passed for a latrine was a flimsy plywood shed with a rough seat over a cut-down 55-gallon barrel. There were no local national contractors to pump them empty either. When they got full, the barrels were dragged



The latrines in the early days

out from under the seat, diesel fuel added to the contents which were then set on fire that put a black, smelly cloud of unmentionable content wafting over the camp.

What about showers? There were none. Over the next couple of days, they installed a small 20 gallon water heater on a shelf above the walls of the mud brick ruins, put some plywood on the floor to stay out of the mud, and installed kitchen sprayers as shower heads.

Three days later, the first A-

10 Thunderbolt IIs arrived at the airfield.

Three days after that, the first weapons arrived. A total of six M-16s.

See, things aren't really all that bad here today. And we have the Airmen who broke ground to thank for where we are today.

Over the next couple of months I plan on sharing more of these photos showing the early Air Force days at Bagram Airfield. They are a real treasure.



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2009 Holiday Mailing Deadline

By Tech. John Jung, 455th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan -- The U.S. Postal Service announced its recommended mailing dates for delivery by Christmas to U.S. military servicemembers serving overseas at APO/FPO addresses in Afghanistan.

Holiday mail for servicemembers stationed in Afghanistan should be sent by Dec. 4, 2009 for arrival by Christmas, according to Postal Service officials. Express Mail cannot be used to mail packages to Afghanistan, however Priority Mail is available.

Priority Mail packaging products, including the Priority Mail Flat-Rate boxes can be obtained for free at any Post Office, or online at shop.usps.com. The Priority Mail Large Flat-Rate Box can be used to mail to any overseas military address, no matter the weight of the box, for \$11.95.

The Postal Service offers free "Military Care Kits," designed for military families sending packages overseas. The mailing kits can be ordered by phone by calling 1-800-610-8734 and asking for the Military Care Kit. Each kit includes two "America Supports You" large Priority Mail Flat-Rate boxes, four medium-sized Priority Mail Flat-Rate boxes, six Priority Mail labels, one roll of Priority Mail tape and six customs forms with envelopes.

"All packages and mail must be addressed to the individual servicemember by name, without rank, in accordance with DoD regulations" said Master Sgt. Deb LaGrandQuintana, Official Mail Manager, 455th Expeditionary Communications Squadron. "Military overseas units are assigned an APO or FPO zip code and in many cases, that zip code travels with the unit wherever they go," continued the 15-year Air Force veteran deployed from Buckley Air Force Base, Colo. and resident of Denver.

The Postal Service places APO/FPO mail to overseas military servicemembers on special transportation destined to be delivered as soon as possible.

All mail addressed to military Post Offices overseas is subject to certain conditions or restrictions regarding content, preparation and handling. APO/FPO addresses generally require customs forms. To get updated mailing restrictions by individual APO/FPO zip go to www.usps.com.

Military Overseas Mailing and Packaging Tips

- If you use a regular box, use a sturdy one to protect the contents with no writing on the outside.
- Cushion contents with newspaper, bubble wrap, or styrofoam. Pack tightly to avoid shifting.
- Package food items like cookies, fudge, candies, etc. securely in leak-proof containers.
- Use pressure-sensitive or nylon-reinforced packing tape.
- Do not use wrapping paper, string, masking tape, or cellophane tape outside the package.
- Print the complete military service member's name (without rank), unit, and APO/FPO delivery address, and your return address on one side only of the package.
- Place a return address label inside the package.
- Stuff fragile items with newspaper or packing material to avoid damage
- Remove batteries from toys/appliances. Wrap and place them next to the items inside.
- Purchase insurance and delivery confirmation service for reassurance of package delivery.

2009 Overseas Military Holiday Mailing Deadlines

Military Mail Addressed To	First-Class Mail Letters/Cards	Priority Mail	Parcel Airlift Mail	Space Available Mail	Parcel Post
APO/FPO AE ZIP 09354	Dec 4, 2009	Dec 4, 2009	Dec 1, 2009	Nov 21, 2009	Nov 13, 2009

NEWS BRIEFS

IMMUNIZATIONS: Are your immunizations up to date? Active duty members are required to stay current on all immunizations during their deployment. Report to your nearest medical treatment facility to check your status and get vaccinated. For questions, contact Task Force Medical Public Health, 431-4426.

NEWCOMERS INPROCESSING: All Air Force members are required to inprocess with PERSCO. The inprocessing will start your combat pay entitlements. If you have been in the AOR for at least 30 days and you are not receiving combat pay, visit Finance in the crow's nest tower on Camp Cunningham. If you know for a fact that you did not inprocess with PERSCO, please visit PERSCO located in Bldg. 700 near the passenger terminal. Call 431-2070/4409 for more information.

COMBAT O: Combat Orientation is Wednesday at 0100Z/0530L at the MWR Clamshell. Uniform is Air Force PT uniform for fitness assessment. This is a mandatory briefing for all Air Force personnel assigned to Bagram Airfield. Accountability is tracked and will be forwarded to the first sergeants.

Smoking is allowed:

- ☐ In your room
- ☐ Between the huts
- ☐ In a GOV
- ☒ None of the above

Smoking is **ONLY** authorized in designated areas.

By order of the
Wing Commander



~~EVERYONE~~
~~Employees:~~



Must wash their hands
before returning to work...

Force Protection
Tip of the Week:

Do not take backpacks, briefcases, suitcases or packages into public gathering facilities or areas. **Do not** leave these items unattended anywhere.

455 AEW AT/FP Office: 431-4207
Capt. Sprute - Antiterrorism Officer
MSgt. Holtzmann - Antiterrorism Superintendent

Force Protection is **your** business - **everyone** is a sensor



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774 EAS - SSgt. Jerome Roberts

455 EAEF - MSgt. Cliff Smith

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79 EFS (F-16CJ) - Capt. Bryan Finkel

755 AEG - SrA Frances Castillo/Capt. Bursick

577 EPBS - A1C Matthew Gilder

755 AES - TSgt. Janna Kuh

504 EASOG - Capt. Jacob Chisolm

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